We claim:

1. A conjugate comprising:

(a) at least one therapeutic compound; and

(b) one or more PEG polymers and/or oligomers, each joined to a bonding site on the therapeutic compound by a hydrolyzable bond, said PEG polymers and/or oligomers each:

(i) comprising a straight or branched PEG segment consisting of 1 to 25 polyethylene glycol units; and

(ii) comprising a salt-forming moiety.

2. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

3. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the straight or branched PEG segment consists of from 2 to 20 polyethylene glycol units.

4. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the polyethylene glycol oligomer has a number of polyethylene glycol units selected from the group consisting of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

5. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the salt-forming moiety is selected from the group consisting of: ammonium, carboxylate, phosphate, sulfate and mesylate.

6. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the therapeutic compound is derivatized by from 1 up to the maximum number of sites of attachment for the polyethylene glycol oligomer(s).

7. The conjugate of claim 1, which, when delivered via the oral route of administration to treat a mammalian subject having a disease condition responsive to the therapeutic compound, provides a therapeutically effective dose of the therapeutic compound to the blood.

8. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the therapeutic compound is a peptide.

9. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the therapeutic compound is a protein.

10. A pharmaceutical composition comprising:

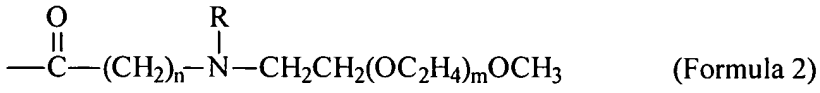
(a) a conjugate of claim 1; and

(b) a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

11. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 10, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

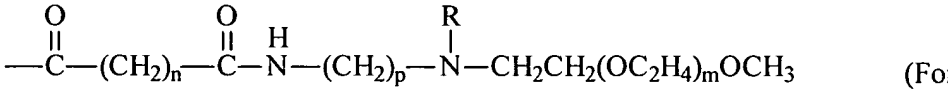
12. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 10 in a form suitable for oral administration.

13. A conjugate comprising a therapeutic compound joined by hydrolysable bond(s) to one or more PEG oligomer(s) selected from the group consisting of:



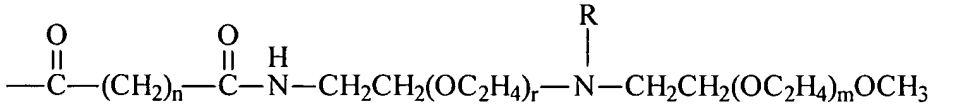
(Formula 2)

wherein n is from 1 to 7, m is from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



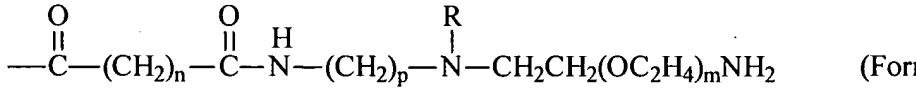
(Formula 3)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



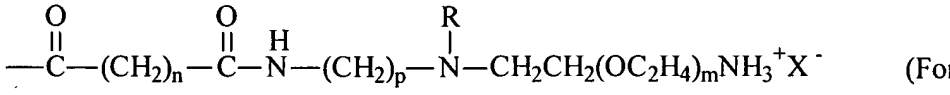
(Formula 4)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, m and r are each independently from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



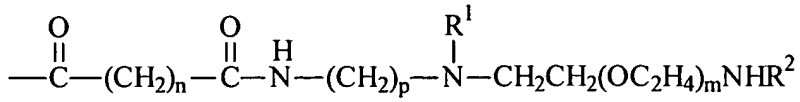
(Formula 5)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25 and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



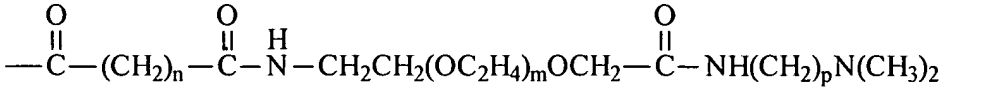
(Formula 6)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, R is hydrogen or lower alkyl, and X^- is a negative ion;



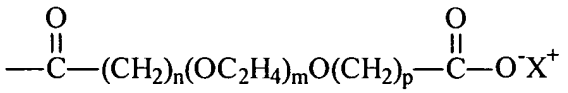
(Formula 7)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, and R^1 and R^2 are each independently hydrogen or lower alkyl;



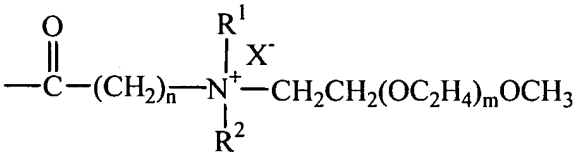
(Formula 8)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8 and m is from 2 to 25;



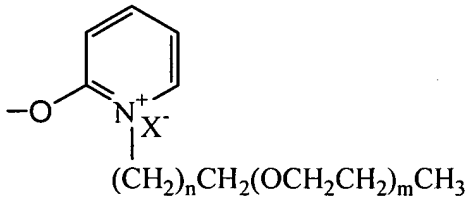
(Formula 9)

wherein n and p are each independently from 1 to 6, m is from 2 to 25 and X^+ is a positive ion;



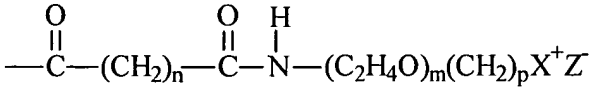
(Formula 10)

wherein n is from 1 to 5, m is from 2 to 25, X^- is a negative ion, and wherein R^1 and R^2 are each independently hydrogen or lower alkyl;



(Formula 11)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, m is from 2 to 25 and X^- is a negative ion; and



(Formula 12)

wherein n is from 1 to 12, m is from 2 to 25, p is from 2 to 12, X^+ is a positive ion and Z^- is a negative ion.

14. The conjugate of claim 13, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

15. The conjugate of claim 13, wherein the therapeutic compound is derivatized by from 1 up to the maximum number of sites of attachment for the polyethylene glycol oligomer(s).

16. The conjugate of claim 13, wherein the therapeutic compound is a peptide.

17. The conjugate of claim 13, wherein the therapeutic compound is a protein.

18. A pharmaceutical composition comprising:

(a) a conjugate of claim 13; and

(b) a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

19. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 18, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

20. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 18 in a form suitable for oral administration.

21. A method of treating a mammalian subject having a disease condition responsive to a therapeutic compound, said method comprising administering to the subject of an effective disease treating amount of a conjugate comprising:

(a) at least one therapeutic compound; and

(b) one or more PEG polymers and/or oligomers, each joined to a bonding site on the therapeutic compound by a hydrolyzable bond, said PEG polymers and/or oligomers each:

(i) comprising a straight or branched PEG segment consisting of 1 to 25 polyethylene glycol units; and

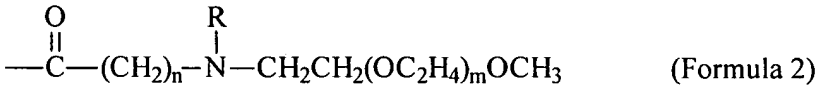
(ii) comprising a salt-forming moiety.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

23. The conjugate of claim 21, wherein the therapeutic compound is a peptide.

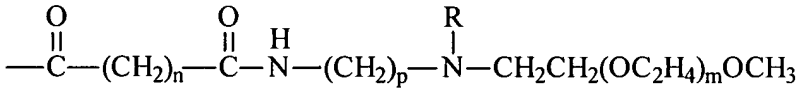
24. The conjugate of claim 21, wherein the therapeutic compound is a protein.

25. A method of treating a mammalian subject having a disease condition responsive to a therapeutic compound, said method comprising administering to the subject of an effective disease treating amount of a conjugate comprising the therapeutic compound joined by hydrolyzable bond(s) to one or more PEG oligomer(s) selected from the group consisting of:



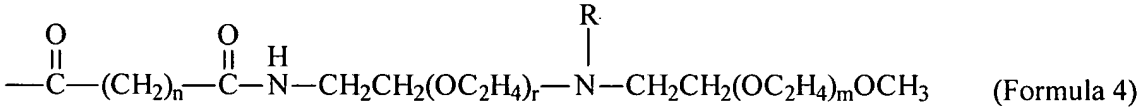
(Formula 2)

wherein n is from 1 to 7, m is from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



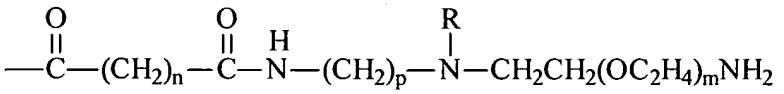
(Formula 3)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



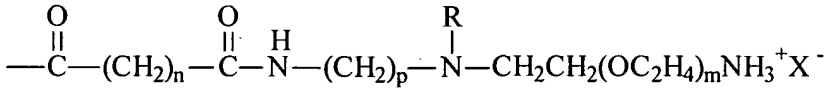
(Formula 4)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, m and r are each independently from 2 to 25, and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



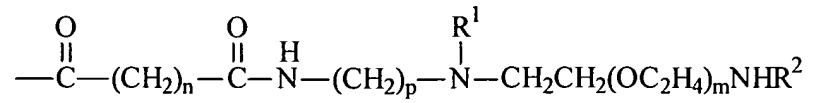
(Formula 5)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25 and R is hydrogen or lower alkyl;



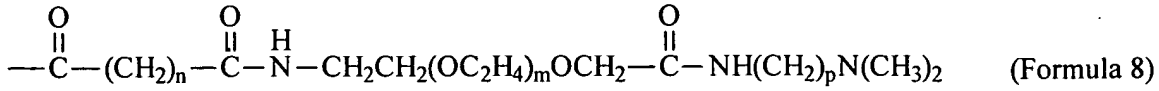
(Formula 6)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, R is hydrogen or lower alkyl, and X^- is a negative ion;



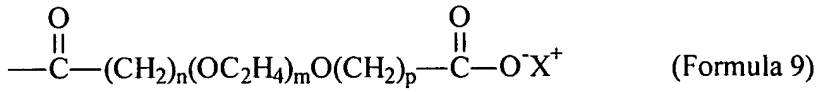
(Formula 7)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8, m is from 2 to 25, and R^1 and R^2 are each independently hydrogen or lower alkyl;



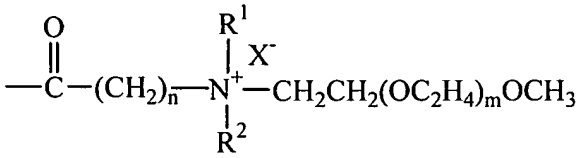
(Formula 8)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, p is from 2 to 8 and m is from 2 to 25;



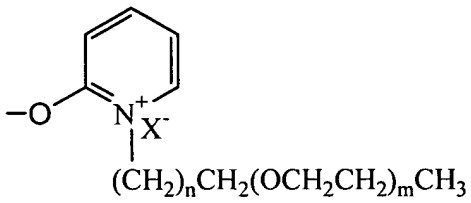
(Formula 9)

wherein n and p are each independently from 1 to 6, m is from 2 to 25 and X^+ is a positive ion;



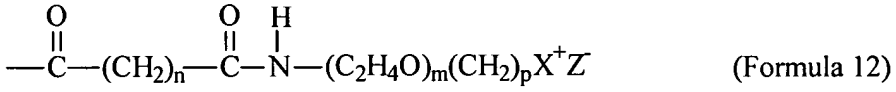
(Formula 10)

wherein n is from 1 to 5, m is from 2 to 25, X^- is a negative ion, and wherein R^1 and R^2 are each independently hydrogen or lower alkyl;



(Formula 11)

wherein n is from 1 to 6, m is from 2 to 25 and X^- is a negative ion; and



(Formula 12)

wherein n is from 1 to 12, m is from 2 to 25, p is from 2 to 12, X^+ is a positive ion and Z^- is a negative ion.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the conjugate is a prodrug.

27. The conjugate of claim 25, wherein the therapeutic compound is a peptide.

28. The conjugate of claim 25, wherein the therapeutic compound is a protein.